

Pandemic Influenza Plan - Special Health Care Needs

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Background

The Special Health Care Needs Pandemic Flu Subcommittee was given the mission to ensure Missourians with special health care needs in the community are recognized and receive full and equitable access to care. The population focus of this subcommittee is individuals living in their place of residence who require medical support and intervention.

Numerous state emergency preparedness plans were reviewed and most were found to use the broad special needs definition.¹ Consensus was reached within the subcommittee that a focus on persons with special health care needs who receive care in their place of residence would allow a functional approach to the charge of the committee. For the purpose of clarity, the subcommittee developed unique definitions for ‘special health care needs’ and a ‘home’ (refer to the Definitions section).

In addition, the subcommittee has strategically considered a variety of functional approaches to planning and preparation. Because of the vulnerability of people with special health care needs and the nature of pandemic flu, the primary focus of this committee has been ensuring that individuals with special health care needs and their family members are as prepared as possible. Since the addressed individuals often receive services and supports in their place of residence, an emphasis has been placed on training those who provide these services and supports. As providers interact with people with special health care needs, discussion of preparation and planning for pandemic flu should become routine. Providers will help individuals and their family members think proactively through the various aspects of preparation to minimize risk during a pandemic. In addition, providers will have a better understanding of the challenges they, and the people with whom they work, will face during a pandemic and will prepare to fulfill their roles and responsibilities under such conditions to the greatest degree possible. Easy-to-use tools to support planning and preparation have been developed, including the Special Health Care Needs insert for the Preparing for Pandemic Flu: A Community Guide. These materials will assist persons with special health care needs living at home or the caregivers of persons with special health care needs and are available at www.dhss.mo.gov/Ready_in_3/PandemicInfluenza.html.

Definitions

Special Health Care Needs: Those who have acute or chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional conditions and who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by individuals generally. This definition includes the frail elderly.

¹ The special needs population includes individuals with physical, mental, sensory, cognitive, cultural, ethnic, socio-economic (including homeless), age, citizenship status, or any other circumstance creating barriers to understanding or the ability to act/react as requested of the general population during all phases of emergency management. *Annex X, Special Needs Task Force, Emergency Preparedness*

Home: An individual residence, facility, or premises occupied by individual(s) who need or are provided with up to 24-hour support/care to meet their needs. Twenty-four hour professional medical care is not provided. Examples of homes may include:

- Individual(s) home
- Independent living
- Assisted living
- Group homes
- Medical foster homes
- Therapeutic foster homes
- Treatment family homes
- Residential care facilities
- Hospice

Roles and Responsibilities

The subcommittee members determined that a statewide educational effort should be made by case managers/service providers to convey a consistent approach for pandemic influenza preparedness. Educational materials will be provided to case managers/service providers to make training a part of their routine visits to ensure families are adequately educated and prepared. The objective is to make pandemic influenza preparedness a part of families' everyday lives and promote family accountability.

Agencies addressing special health care needs populations

- Area Agencies on Aging
- Centers for Independent Living
- Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- Department of Health and Senior Services
- Department of Mental Health
- Governor's Council on Disability
- Home Health Agencies
- Hospice
- Local County Health Departments
- Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities

Resources for individuals with special health care needs

- *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:* <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/>
- *The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) hotline, 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636), is available in English and Spanish, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. TTY: 1-888-232-6348*
- *World Health Organization (Influenza Pandemic Threat: Current Situation):* http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/pandemic/en/index.html
- *Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services Pandemic Influenza Website:* <http://www.dhss.mo.gov/PandemicInfluenza/>
- *American Red Cross:* http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_603_00.html
- *Disaster Preparedness for People with Disabilities:* <http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/disability.pdf>
- *A Guide for Individuals and Families:* <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/pdf/guide.pdf>
- *Checklist for Individuals and Families:* <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/pdf/Individuals.pdf>
- *CDC Public Health Workbook to Define, Locate and Reach Special, Vulnerable, and At-Risk Populations in an Emergency (DRAFT):* www.bt.cdc.gov/workbook